

CASE STUDY OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMME: BASIS FOR PROACTIVE AND LIFE SKILLS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Date Received: 04/03/2018

Date Revised: 09/03/2018

Date Accepted: 12/03/2018

ABSTRACT

It is widely accepted that inclusion is the educational expression of normalisation, whereby the child is provided with all possible opportunities which are similarly given to his mainstream counterparts. The current work examines the features and services of the inclusive education programme of New Era University, a higher education institution in the Philippines. This descriptive-evaluative study utilised data-gathering methodologies, which include observation, interview, survey, and documentary analysis. This case study can serve as a prototype of inclusive education as it is anchored on the ecological systems theory, which proposes that the different aspects of the environment influence the development of the child, more so, those with special educational needs. Implications are offered for policy and future research.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Life Skills, Mainstream Education, School Psychology, Special Educational Needs.

INTRODUCTION

New Era University (NEU) implements an inclusive education programme from preschool to university level leading to apprenticeship which prepares Children with Special Educational Needs (CSEN) for a meaningful and productive life that prepares them for the future. Such is an exemplar of proactive and life skills inclusive education.

Keeping its doors steadfastly open for the past 14 years has enabled the NEU's Special Education Department to reach out and empower CSEN to achieve educational and vocational competencies expected from mainstream students. This inclusive education programme, which aims to provide needed support of CSEN from entry to exit, is a pioneering effort in the Philippines.

Bronfenbrenner (as cited by Ryan, 2001) looks at a child's development within the context of the system of relationships that form his environment. Bronfenbrenner's theory defines complex 'layers' of environment, each having an effect on a child's development. This theory has recently been renamed 'Bioecological Systems Theory' to

emphasise that a child's own biology is a primary environment fuelling his development. The interaction between factors in the child's maturing biology, his immediate family environment, and the societal landscape fuels and steers his development. Changes or conflict in any one layer will ripple throughout other layers. To study a child's development then, we must look not only at the child and her immediate environment, but also at the interaction of the larger environment as well.

Within this context, part of the child's environment is his school. Thus, CSEN best grow in a milieu where they are integrated with their typically-developing peers within the mainstream education. The current movement of inclusive education has been moulded by SEN's myriad social history, landmark legislation, significant political events, and the valiant advocacy of parents of CSEN.

An earlier study (Stainback and Stainback, 1984) presented a rationale for the merger of special and regular education into a unified system structured to meet the unique needs of all students. It is argued that the instructional needs of students do not warrant the operation of a dual system and

that operation of a dual system is inefficient. Factors contributing to this inefficiency involve classification, competition and duplication, eligibility by category, curricular options, and labelling of students who do not fit regular education programmes as 'deviant', which could be argued as a sort of Marxist theory of mental illness (Relajo, 2017b).

Therefore, the consequences of amalgamating these systems are outlined in terms of personnel preparation and assignment, classification, support personnel, funding, and realisation of individual differences, among other factors. It is argued that such an amalgamation would not reflect the lack of capability of special education to meet the needs of its students, but would epitomise a protraction of the process of including these students into both the educational and social mainstream.

In the Philippines, it was not until the late 1990's when students with disabilities were educated in settings that are classified as mainstream and inclusive schools. Meanwhile, according to national averages in the United States (Gross and Lake, 2014), charter schools serve fewer students with special needs, leaving them open to charges that they are exclusionary. Charter leaders argue that when special education enrolment rates are lower, it is due to the fact charter schools are less likely to identify a child as requiring special education services and more likely to address the child's learning or behaviour so that he can benefit fully in the mainstream classroom environment.

Hence, such uncertainty about the causes of low special education enrolment puts charter schools squarely in the middle of gruesome legislative battles and antagonistic media narratives, and leaves us wanting for the information we need to improve conditions for students and schools. Rather than rhetoric-based battles, we need quality conversations about the convolution of the issue. To initiate that conversation, the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE), with the support of the Walton Family Foundation, working with researchers across the country to start an innovative research agenda designed for students with special needs in charter schools.

The inclusive education programme at NEU is founded on the specific ideologies covering rights, psychosocial,

religious, and economic issues and perspectives. It firmly upholds the theoretical-conceptual framework that the CSEN best where he is integrated among his typically-developing peers in the mainstream class. Such placement allows the student to attain the goals of normalisation without discrimination and segregation and provides the CSEN with opportunities to achieve his best, and pursue a career within an encouraging environment so he too can attain his life goals.

Moreover, this programme recognises the participation and contribution of the home, school, and the community in rearing the CSEN, while being aware of his contributions to his community and the wider world. Despite limitations, the CSEN can be guided to actualise his potentials and consistently promote the best he can in whatever context he will be in the future.

An earlier study (Bender et al., 1995) investigated the types of instructional strategies offered in mainstream classes, where the researchers asked 127 mainstream teachers in Grades 1 through 8 to complete a self-evaluation concerning instructional strategies used in their general education classes. Also, each teacher completed questionnaires relating to their attitudes toward their own efficacy and toward mainstreaming. ANOVAs comparing teachers with positive attitudes towards mainstreaming and teachers with less positive attitudes indicated that the teachers with less positive attitudes used effective mainstream instructional strategies less frequently.

West and Cannon's (1988) work was designed to identify and validate essential collaborative consultation competencies needed by both regular and special educators interacting to meet the educational needs of special students in the regular classroom. A 100-member interdisciplinary, expert panel from 47 states identified 47 competencies in eight categories as vital to the consultation process, using a Delphi technique. Those competencies which garnered the highest panel ratings involved skills in interactive communication, collaborative problem solving, and personal characteristics. Skills in evaluating the effectiveness of consultation were also deemed particularly important. Competencies receiving ratings indicating less importance to the consultation process included consultation research, theory, models,

and systems analysis. Staff development competencies were rated as important, but not essential. Of particular note was the intense level of panel participation, involvement in competency generation and modification, and 'ownership' in the identification vital competencies.

Meanwhile, Soukakou (2012) aimed to design an observation measure designed to assess classroom quality in inclusive preschool programmes, the Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP). Developing the rating scale entailed systematic fieldwork in inclusive settings and review of the literature on preschool inclusion. Results from the validation study showed that the measure has good inter-rater agreement, is internally consistent, and demonstrates a remarkable factor structure. Correlations with other measures of classroom quality provided initial evidence for construct validity. Soukakou argues that traditional measures used to assess quality in early childhood classrooms are useful, but may not be sufficient in seizing dimensions of quality that relates particularly to the support for children with disabilities included in preschool programmes.

Measurement similar to Soukakou's are particularly important, as it has been observed in the past that the way that researchers and educators understand and describe the process of reading has been revolutionised. Researchers examine the current developments in reading abilities among second language readers, whereby developments were further discussed in terms of a theory of general second language proficiency encompassing both oral and written language. Implications on the nature of second language reading, the database in second language reading, text-and knowledge-driven operations in second language reading, and second language reading classroom factors have been provided. Assessment of comprehension is briefly reviewed, and recommendations are provided for theoretical, cultural, and educational implications (Reijo et al., 2016).

Indeed, the movement toward inclusion, as argued by Chang et al. (2005) have made educating and caring for children with disabilities an increasingly critical part of the early education teacher's role. The article described the extent to which early childhood teacher preparation programmes are including early childhood SEN within the

context of intervention content and experiences as part of their core course and practicum requirements. A nationally representative survey of 438 chairs and directors of early childhood teacher preparation programmes revealed that while a large proportion of programmes consider early childhood SEN intervention to be a part of the mission of their programme, the amount of coursework and practicum experience vary considerably by content area and level of degree offered by the programme.

According to previous researchers (Spencer et al., 1997), a structure that emphasises and includes individuals' intersubjective experiences with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is introduced and compared with self-organisational perspectives, i.e., Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST). Therefore, the similarities, differences, and advantages of each structure are described.

For instance, in a demonstration of PVEST's utility, a fraction of data gathered from the 3rd year of a longitudinal study (14 to 16-year-old middle adolescent African-Americans) is used for assessing an achievement variable: negative learning attitude. Explored separately by gender, a regression model that contained risk, stress, and a reactive coping variable for the prediction of negative learning attitudes were investigated. For boys, stress was an independent stressor across steps independent of the other variables entered; social support was particularly important for males. For girls, not only was stress not a critical, but it was also only the social support variable, perceived unpopularity with peers, that was a significant determinants of girls' negative learning attitude. Whereas for boys, the finding implies crucially important roles for teachers and peers in the negative learning attitude of mid-adolescent economically disadvantaged African-American students.

Recent reports have suggested that the prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is substantially higher than previously recognised. We sought to quantify prevalence of ASDs in children in South Thames, in the UK (Baird et al., 2006).

1. Aims

In view of the earlier studies outlined above, this study sought to address the following points:

- What is the current status of the NEU inclusive education programme?
- How has the programme contributed to the academics, behavioural, and socio-emotional development of CSEN?
- What is the evaluation of the NEU inclusive education programme based from the ratings of the parents?
- What can still be improved to sustain the programme and to further improve it?

2. Materials and Methods

The main objective of the study is to identify what makes NEU's inclusive education programme an exemplar of proactive and life skills inclusive education. The study dealt on the different programmes available for CSEN from preschool, primary, intermediate, secondary, vocational, and university level.

For the purpose of this study, the researchers involved parents as participants to assess the effectiveness of inclusive education and the contribution of the programme to the development of the children with SEN.

2.1 Survey Instrument

The researchers adapted questions from existing surveys developed by Dizon (n.d.) with some modifications in order to address the criteria for evaluating the programme. The self-made questionnaire was divided into four sections: psychosocial, academic, vocational, and independence. The participants have to rate each statements whether they think it is: highly satisfactory, satisfactory, slightly satisfactory, or not satisfactory at all. The researchers also analysed pertinent documents to establish the current status of the programme. Earlier study by Dizon (n.d.) suggest that the instrument has a mean validity coefficient of 0.86.

2.2 Statistical Analysis

The questionnaire was developed and rated on Likert type of rating scale. Both quantitative and descriptive methods were used to ascertain perception among parents of CSENs. Data were statistically evaluated using weighted mean. Each value or level is assigned a number used by Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to compute statistics.

3. Results, Interpretation, and Discussion

As can be gleaned from Table 1, the participants strongly agree that their children are being encouraged towards greater autonomy and academic performance, and are being trained to engage in competitive jobs. The participants also strongly agreed that their children learn how to solve practical problems. Hence, the result suggests that through inclusive programme the performance of CSEN improve and that the educational goals for CSEN have been met.

Table 2 shows the views of the participants of the inclusive education programme on how it contributed to the development of CSEN in terms of behaviour. As can be seen, the participants strongly agree that the programme helps the child to be more considerate of others ($\bar{x} = 4.38$); child becomes more manageable in terms of doing school activities ($\bar{x} = 4.43$); and, develops how to have self-confidence ($\bar{x} = 4.33$). Participants also strongly agree that in the inclusive programme, the child may attain the focus that he could not have before ($\bar{x} = 4.33$) and that the

| Criteria | \bar{X} | Interpretation |
|--|-----------|----------------|
| The child is encouraged towards greater autonomy and academic performance. | 4.28 | SA |
| The programme provides the quality of education suited to the child. | 4.10 | SA |
| The programme enhances the child's ability to read, write, and count. | 4.50 | SA |
| The child learns how solve practical problems. | 4.35 | SA |
| The child is being trained to engage in competitive jobs. | 4.23 | SA |

SA: Strongly Agree, Overall $\bar{X} = 4.29$

Table 1. Academic Domain of the Inclusive Education Programme

| Criteria | \bar{X} | Interpretation |
|---|-----------|----------------|
| The programme helps the child to be more considerate to others. | 4.38 | SA |
| The child may attain the focus that he could not have before. | 4.33 | SA |
| The child develops self-confidence. | 4.33 | SA |
| The programme helps the child to attain the prescribed behaviour in the curriculum. | 4.93 | SA |
| The child becomes more manageable in terms of doing school activities. | 4.43 | SA |

SA: Strongly Agree, Overall $\bar{X} = 4.48$

Table 2. Behavioural Domain of the Inclusive Education Programme

programme helps the child to attain the prescribed behaviour in the curriculum ($\bar{x} = 4.93$). It is evident that the programme helps in redirecting the CSEN's undesirable behaviour to one that is more appropriate.

Table 3 shows that the participants strongly agree that the programme helps their children to conform in different situations ($\bar{x} = 4.95$); are less anxious in new situations ($\bar{x} = 4.13$); and, develops their children's potential in socialising ($\bar{x} = 4.43$). Participants also strongly agree that the programme helps the CSEN in making successful and proper adaptations in different contexts ($\bar{x} = 4.00$); and they learn how to build friendship, respect others, verbal/social propriety; and acceptance of individual differences ($\bar{x} = 4.43$). The data implies that the programme contributes in leading the CSEN to a more stable way of thinking, feeling, and behaving about themselves and others.

Table 4 shows that the criterion for the psychosocial domain wherein students comply with the support worker is highly satisfactory ($\bar{x} = 3.58$). In line with other factors, such as students play with other children, participates in class

| Criteria | \bar{X} | Interpretation |
|---|-----------|----------------|
| The programme helps CSEN to conform in different situations. | 4.95 | SA |
| The child is less anxious in new situations. | 4.13 | SA |
| The programme develops the child's potential in socialising. | 4.43 | SA |
| The programme helps the CSEN in making successful and proper adaptations in different contexts. | 4.00 | SA |
| The child learns how to build friendship, respect to others, verbal/social propriety, and acceptance of individual differences. | 4.43 | SA |

SA: Strongly Agree, Overall $\bar{X} = 4.39$

Table 3. Socio-emotional Domain of the Inclusive Education Programme

| Criteria | \bar{X} | Interpretation |
|--|-----------|---------------------|
| Plays with other children. | 3.22 | Satisfactory |
| Participates in class/school programmes. | 3.30 | Satisfactory |
| Observes class routines and rules. | 3.18 | Highly satisfactory |
| Cooperates with the support worker. | 3.58 | Satisfactory |
| Demonstrates self-confidence. | 3.16 | Satisfactory |

Overall $\bar{X} = 3.28$

Table 4. Psychosocial Domain of the Inclusive Education Programme

programmes, observes class routines and rules, and demonstrates sense of confidence, the parents agreed that these are satisfactory. These mean that the existing programme helps CSEN in the development of their psychosocial skills.

Table 5 presents the assessment of parents in the education aspects of the programme, where the students express themselves much more adequately were assessed as highly satisfactory ($\bar{x} = 3.60$), while in the aspects of demonstrating better study habits and skills, exercising increasing numerical skills, making simple choices and decisions with supervision, demonstrating more visibly applied academic skills in verbal, numerical, science and other academic areas were rated as satisfactory. The data reflects that the programme helps CSEN to meet the standards set out according to their assessed abilities and strengths.

The findings on Table 6 show that in the vocational programme wherein students can demonstrate better imitation skills in performing modeled tasks, better comprehends instructions, initiates simple tasks, observes greater efficiency in doing tasks at school, and expresses

| Criteria | \bar{X} | Interpretation |
|--|-----------|---------------------|
| Expresses himself much more adequately. | 3.60 | Highly satisfactory |
| Demonstrates better study habits and skills. | 2.98 | Satisfactory |
| Exercises increasing numerical skills. | 2.86 | Satisfactory |
| Makes simple choices and decisions with supervision. | 2.76 | Satisfactory |
| Demonstrates applied academic skills. | 2.98 | Satisfactory |
| Overall $\bar{X} = 3.30$ | | |

Table 5. Educational Domain of the Inclusive Education Programme

| Criteria | \bar{X} | Interpretation |
|--|-----------|----------------|
| Demonstrates better imitation skills in performing modelled tasks. | 3.02 | Satisfactory |
| Better comprehension of task instructions. | 3.08 | Satisfactory |
| Initiates simple tasks at home and school. | 2.88 | Satisfactory |
| Observes greater efficiency in doing task at home and school | 2.09 | Satisfactory |
| Expresses desire to pursue a career he wants in the future | 2.84 | Satisfactory |

Overall $\bar{X} = 3.12$

Table 6. Vocational Domain of the Inclusive Education Programme

desire to pursue a career in the future were evaluated satisfactory by parents. This means that the programme is successful in developing CSEN's motor skill, manual dexterity, and coordination, which are necessary transitions to facilitate employment.

Table 7 presents the assessment of how students demonstrate independence in their activities. The criterion which asks whether the student observe cautions and care in school is highly satisfactory ($\bar{x} = 3.06$). While socialises properly with peers during breaks, attends to personal necessities, initiates school routines, and assumes simple class responsibilities are believed to be satisfactory. This implies that the programme helps in developing self-determination to CSEN so that they will be able to express choices and have sense of independence in their everyday activities.

4. Discussion

A related study (Brownell et al., 2009) investigated the beginning special education teacher quality and the role that knowledge and skill for teaching reading plays in describing their defining characteristics. The researchers assessed the link between beginning teachers' knowledge for teaching reading and their classroom practices during reading instruction and, further, relationships between classroom practices and student achievement expectations on various reading measures. Findings have implied that special education beginning teachers were likely cognizant about teaching reading, but this awareness did not contribute a significant portion of discrepancy to classroom practice. Practices in classroom management, decoding practices, and offering explicit, engaging instruction accounted for a portion of discrepancy in student reading gains.

| Criteria | \bar{x} | Interpretation |
|--|-----------|----------------|
| Observes caution and care in the school. | 3.06 | Satisfactory |
| Socialises with peers during breaks. | 2.64 | Satisfactory |
| Attends to personal necessities with less assistance. | 3.14 | Satisfactory |
| Initiates with his school routines with the least reminders. | 2.96 | Satisfactory |
| Assumes simple class or home responsibilities. | 2.98 | Satisfactory |

Overall $\bar{x} = 3.12$

Table 7. Independence Domain of the Inclusive Education Programme

The study of Brownell et al. (2009) needed to be discussed because this research has similar structure to that particular research. The author's research focussed on classroom practices and they wanted to ascertain how special needs students benefit from the support provided by the University.

Discussion similar to this could also be achieved through research dissemination. One potent way to achieve this is through blogging (Relojo, 2017a). The range, immediacy, and diversity of bloggers' voices are highly compelling; readers are often drawn to blogs for their speed and intimacy. Similarly, social media could also be a potential tool (Relojo, 2015). Social media has definitely transformed the way people interact. The world is becoming increasingly connected through the wonders of the Internet and as a result we now live in a society where access to Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and many other social networking platforms is particularly present everywhere. As a consequence, it has become so popular that it seems that relating to other physically seems outdated. There are loads of social networking sites which are used to document memories, learn about and explore things, advertise oneself and build friendships, but Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube are the significant players.

In line with this, some of the plans of NEU administrators include aspects in order to sustain the well-being of the programme to enhance the curriculum where they will include the physical dimensions like exercises and sport activities (Sagoo, 2017) for those students that excel in physical activities. They are also planning to train the students in clerical jobs like sorting, filing, library management, and even photocopying. Additionally, it is also envisaged to prepare the students for them to live independently by teaching them how to handle money and let them understand the value of money. The administrators also plan to have a linkage with organisations for the university graduates to secure the future of the students and to prepare for future employment. Improvement of facilities like putting up air conditioning for the classrooms and additional rooms for cooking classes for the transitioning students, are also included in the plans of the administrators.

Conclusion

At present, the inclusive education programme of NEU is especially and uniquely designed to properly address the needs of CSEN. Its uniqueness lies on its curriculum from preschool, primary, intermediate, secondary, vocational, and university level. The programme also caters to the needs of special learners for each developmental and transitions stages until such time that they will become independent and ready for employment. The inclusive programme at NEU contributed to the development of the CSEN's academic performance in a way that they are being pushed towards greater autonomy and higher education, and trained to engage in competitive jobs. The CSEN learns on how to solve practical problems and it enhances the children's ability to read, write, and count. With regards to the behavioural aspects, CSEN became more considerate about others and the child became more manageable in terms of doing school activities and develops how to have self-confidence. Pertaining to socio-emotional aspect of the CSEN they are more conforming now in different situations. The CSEN became less anxious in situations that would startle him before and the child develops their potential in socialising with others. The parents are satisfied with the development of their child that is brought by the service of the said programme in areas such as psychosocial, educational, vocational, and independence. According to the parents these were evident in their children particularly by complying with the support worker, expressing themselves much more adequately and observing caution and care in school.

The administrators of the SEN programme have their future plans to enhance and sustain the well-being of the programme and to be highly competitive with other universities who also offer the same programme in the Philippines and neighbouring Asian countries. The inclusive program at NEU effectively applied the ecological theory in making a noble approach to the children with special educational needs.

The researchers recommend conducting another study that will focus to other theory that may be effective when it comes to formulating a programme for CSENs. The researchers also recommend future researchers to look into others' school programme and identify their approach

in addressing the needs of these children, which could also potentially benefit this current programme.

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